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ADULT EDUCATION: THE RESPONSE TO GLOBAL CRISIS
STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF THE PROFESSION
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Adult Educators as HRD Trainer, Moderator and Coach

Experiences of a Chair for Andragogy Bamberg

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Department for Andragogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade certainly is a good reason to look back and summarize the lectures learned in these three decades. Moreover, to look forward to the strengths and challenges of the profession to be served in the future.

This presentation will report some of the experiences made throughout three decades of researching, teaching, and developing in the academic field of Andragogy. The Chair of Andragogy at Bamberg University, Germany was founded in 1978 – at about the same time as the Belgrade Department. So the experiences may confirm parallels, but also show differences. The exchange of both (“international comparison”) will be helpful for better planning of the future professional development of adult educators.

2. THE NEW FIELDS OF “LIFEWIDE LEARNING”

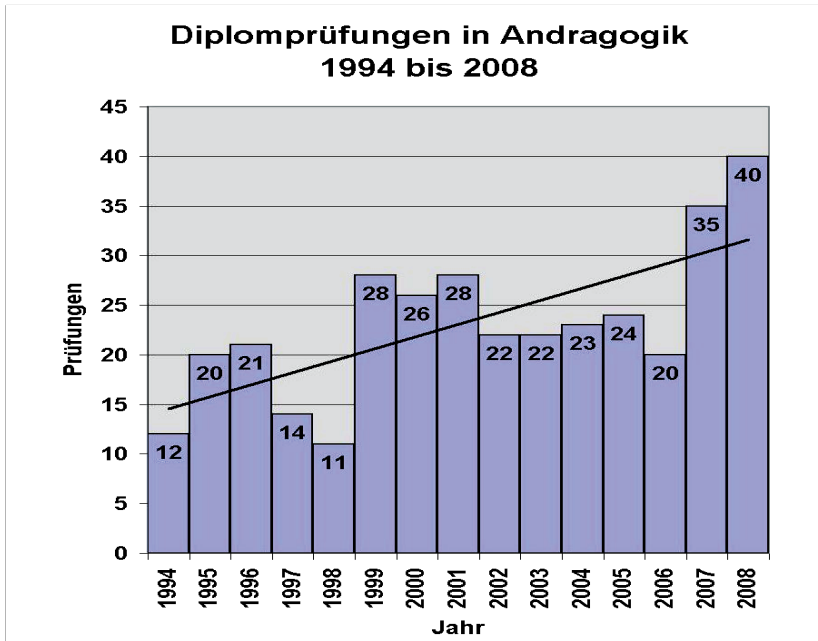


Fig. 1: Graduates in Andragogy at Bamberg University

The increasing interest and need for professionals in Adult Education can best be illustrated by the number of graduates in Andragogy at Bamberg University. While in the 1980s, rarely more than half a dozen students graduated in Andragogy in Bamberg and other German universities, this number increased, even tripled between the early 1990s and today. The growing number of graduates shows that more and more students are interested in this field. But what is more important: They easily find workplaces after graduation in a variety of institutions and positions, being searched experts for all problems of managing change processes.

The roles and positions our graduates took over after finishing their studies surprised us. In the beginning, in the 1970s and 1980s, we had believed that it was our task to educate teachers for adults in adult education institutions. But the majority of the workplaces of our graduates were different: They work in business and industry, politics and churches, cultural institutions and media, and as freelance workers in their own “training and consulting businesses”, they moderate and coach, manage and solve problems, help to identify and solve conflicts and problems, help to find visions and directions. About fifty new workplaces were installed in the region by and for our graduates. It seemed they were needed and helpful experts for many functions and places.

The lesson to be learned was to realize that the world of adult education and learning includes much more than teaching in adult educational institutions; it includes “education and learning of adults in all its forms of expression” (Savicevic 1999, p. 97). This experience influenced and changed our thinking and understanding of the field. It consequently influenced our curricula and perspectives about the qualification needs and versatile provision in formal, non-formal and informal environments - to prepare our students for these new fields of “lifewide learning”.

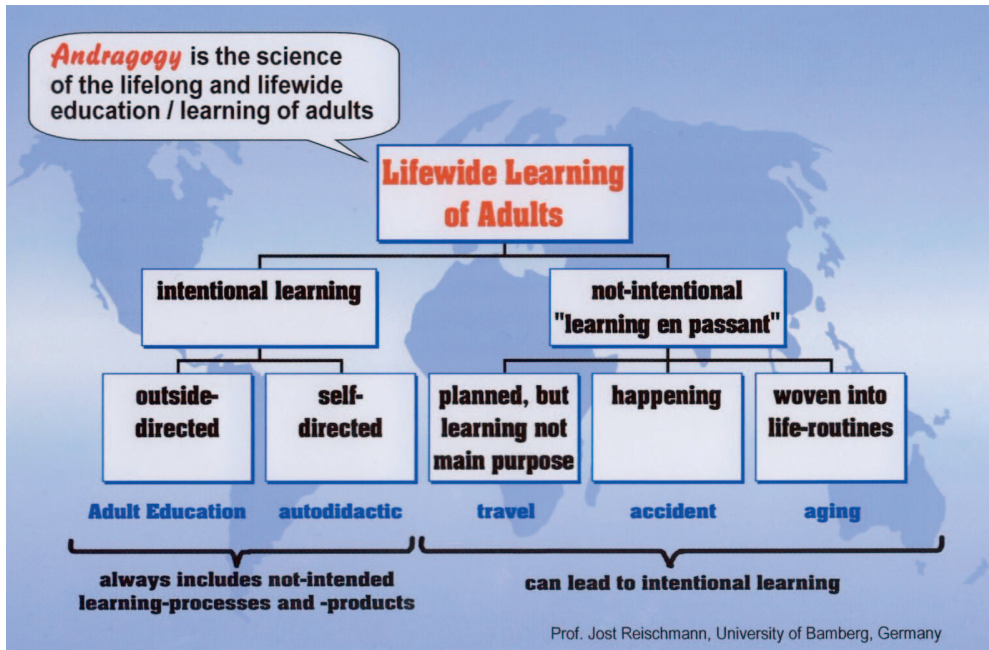


Fig. 2: Structure of “Lifewide Learning” of Adults

3. „ADULT EDUCATOR“ OR “ANDRAGOG”?

During the course of this development, we became aware that “Adult Educator” is a very unclear term. It includes a wide variety of species: the grandma sharing her knowledge of baking cookies, the engineer instructing his staff about a new technology, the political or religious missionary preaching at the marketplace about the true and only life or society – just “everybody” can be an “Adult Educator”. The case studies presented at two Conferences on the History of Adult Education (6th and 11th Standing Conference, Jena, Germany 1996 and Bamberg, Germany 2006) illustrate that variety of understandings – from scholar to “the wise”, from academic specialist to “everybody”:

Type	Description
Scholar, Researcher	works at university Andragog
Professional	graduate from University Andragog
Vocational	fully employed, often managing, moderating, ...
Developer	no "schoolmaster", but grassrooter, facilitator
Teacher	either a) andragogically trained or b) subject matter specialist or c) just doing it
Connector	connecting, integrating institutions
Organizer	building and leading an organization
Humanist	enabling learning by political or private infrastructure
Dedicator	moral/spiritual leader
Orator	offering knowledge/wisdom
"The Wise"	being asked

Fig 3: Prototypes of "Adult Educators"

This unclear borderless term "Adult Educator" makes it difficult to discriminate professional academic educated staff – our graduates – from "everybody". To describe and guarantee quality standards, to claim academic theory and research, and especially: to grow an own identity and offer a unique and specific "label" on the labour-market, we changed the name of our chair from "Adult Education" (Erwachsenenbildung) to "Andragogik".

This term was coined by the German educator Alexander Kapp 1833. Since 1970, andragogy has been used in Europe in the context of evolving academic and professional institutions, with fulltime employed and academically trained professionals: In 1969 the 'Yugoslavian Society for Andragogy' named its journal 'Andragogija'; in 1993 Slovenia's 'Andragoski Center Republike Slovenije' was founded with the journal 'Andragoska Spoznanja'; Prague University (Czechia) has a 'Katedra Andragogiky'. A similar professional and academic expansion developed worldwide, sometimes using the term andragogy: Venezuela has the 'Instituto Internacional de Andragogia', since 1998, the Adult Education Society of Korea publishes the journal 'Andragogy today'. Andragogy became increasingly understood as an educational discipline, the subject of which is the study of lifelong and lifewide education and learning of adults.

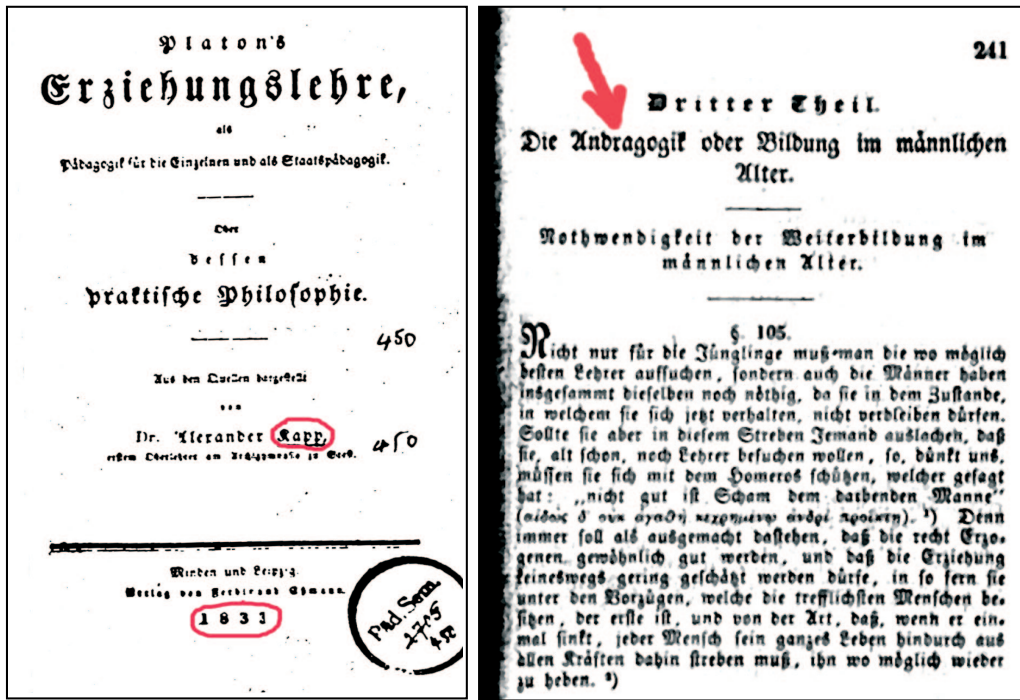


Fig. 4: The first printing of “Andragogy” – Alexander Kapp 1833

Our graduates reported that the specific label “Andragoge” indeed was helpful on the labour-market for employment: It made the employers curious to invite them for interviews, and gave the chance to describe what they had to offer. In many cases, this led to employment.

4. FOUR COMPETENCIES DELIVERED BY OUR PROGRAM

The experiences described and the feedbacks we received from our graduates let us build a curriculum that delivered four competencies to our students: First, it is expected that an andragog is able to teach. Second, we have to prepare them for planning and organizing programs and measures. Third, they need the ability to consult and counsel. And finally, they must be able to do evaluation and research.

“Competencies” in our understanding includes the competency to perform. And it means to reflect why and for what reason something is done (“Handlungskompetenz” und “Reflexionskompetenz”). The competence-based classes usually last three full days, filled with acting, training, trying, and demonstrating. These three days are theory-reduced and focus on performance. By all means, these competency-based classes only make sense in combination with the “normal” knowledge- and

theory-oriented classes, lectures, and readings. Performance has to be melted in and interwoven with knowing and understanding to lead to competency.

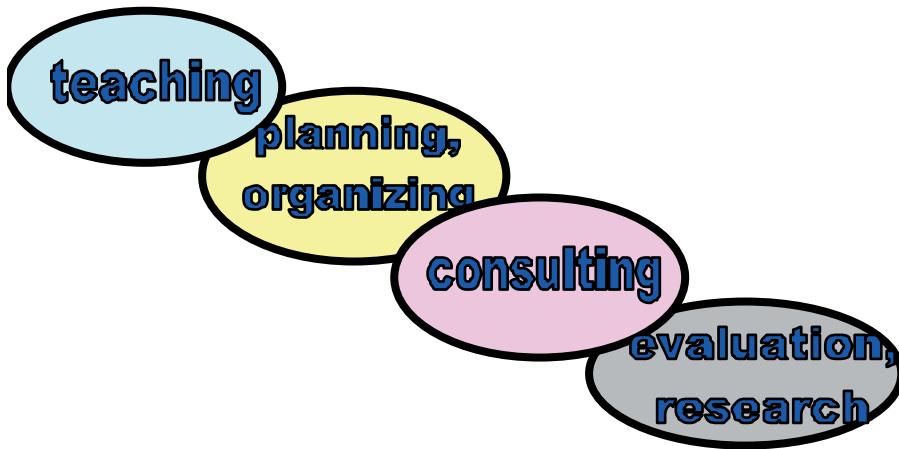


Fig. 5: Competencies for Andragogy-students

4a (HRD-) Trainer

The first expectation of “adult educators” is that they teach – in adult education institutions or in companies and business (HRD – Human Resource Development). We found that teaching often was a starting point for our graduates, but that after a short while they moved up into a supervising position. However, even in this position it is expected that they can convincingly “teach” and advice others how to teach (“Train the Trainer”).

A first module in this competency is “*Visualising, Presentation, Moderation*”. Here, students learn to stand in front of a group, design presentation-material, work with an auditory, present learning material, and interact with groups. In a second module they learn how to *design classes and seminars*. A third module develops *communication-skills*. These competencies are supplemented by a traditional lecture and seminar in “didactics”.

4b. Planning /Organizing

The success of an educational program does not only derive from the quality of teaching (micro-didactics), but also from the learning-supportive planning and organizing of the program (macro-didactics). The module “*program-planning*” supplies planning/organizing strategies under the perspective: How can learning be started and supported by organizational measures? This does not only relate to school-like

settings, but includes under the aspect of “lifewide learning” the challenge how learning occasion can be identified and supported in workplaces, cultural institutions, hospitals, tourist places etc.. An important role for this competency plays the *internship* each of our students has to go through.

4c. Moderator - Counsellor - Consultant - Mediator - Coach

A shared observation in adult education programs is: After the teaching sessions, teachers and learners often meet for a coffee or a beer. And then the “real” questions come up ... This observation opened the insight into a new role of andragogs: not presenting/transporting knowledge (teaching), but helping persons or groups to find their way.

“*Communication skills*” is a module in this competency – and overlaps with the training-competency. This overlapping of modules and traditional seminars is important: It allows repetitions and the insight in interrelations. Moreover, “*moderation-techniques*” overlaps with the teaching module. In the competency seminar “*consulting-strategies and -techniques*”, our students learn a “new language”, and in all these classes they learn a new approach and understanding to problems of people and institutions.

“*Coaching*” is a competency class addressing the widespread problem that most teachers in adult and continuing education are subject matter specialists teaching with limited educational/andragogical ability. This restricts the effect of instruction (knowledge, transfer, application) and gives away the chance to develop company culture and “soft skills”. We developed a concept in which the subject matter specialist is supported before, during and after the course by an andragog. This competency-training builds on the prior trainings of seminar-design and communication-skills.

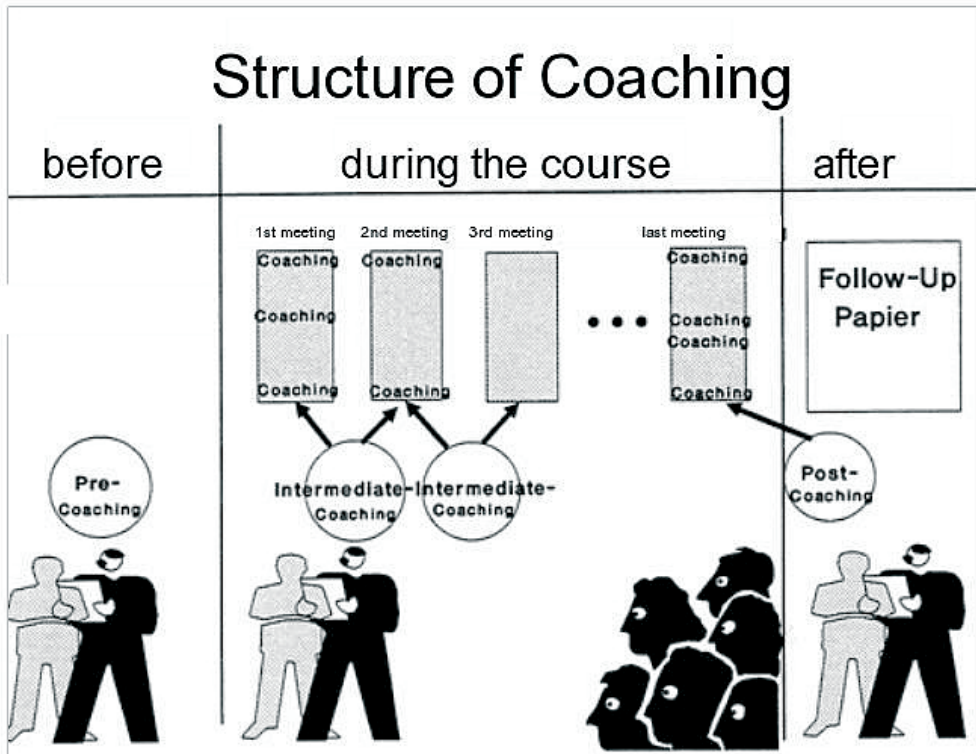


Fig. 6: Structure of the coaching-arrangement

4d. Research, Evaluation

The ability to do research is not only expected from scholars and members of research-organizations, but also in the practical work in adult and continuing education for needs-assessment, evaluation and quality control, planning of programs and feedback to organizers and boards.

Research classes are always included in the normal curriculum of social science students, mostly in the beginning semesters. What we changed: We added one class about *quantitative* and *one about qualitative research* in the final semesters of the study - the time when students have to prepare their thesis. This relates research work to a “real” research question, to a practical application and performance. To support this competence, we offer a *research colloquium* where students present and discuss their research work and *individual consulting*.

4e. Summary

At the end of the final examination, we sometimes ask our students what in their perception has been the most important part of their study. The majority names the competency-classes. This is also true for our alumni, when asked years after graduation. It seems that the preparation to perform successfully and professionally in the practical field adds an important factor to their identity and employability.

One clear observation in the last three decades is that the fields andragogs work in have become diversified and reached new horizons. Change experts are needed that can professionally teach, can plan and organize learning occasions, consult and moderate, evaluate and research – and produce the most successful mix of these ingredients. These multifold competencies performed by professional andragogs in change processes can not be seen separately: It seems the mixture we offered make our graduates flexible and successful in many fields and positions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This world in which we live, is full of change. And change means and deserves learning – throughout life.

The field of Adult Learning and Education is nowadays perceived much more widely and diversifiedly than 20 years ago. And it is perceived much more important: for economic prosperity, for reducing costs, for the public health protection, for the environment, for social expenditures, for enriching personal life, for peaceful and respectful citizenship.

UNESCO stated in the Hamburg-Declaration 1997: “**Adult education** thus becomes more than a right; it **is a key to the twenty-first century**. It is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society. It is a powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice. Adult learning can shape identity and give meaning to life.”

Adult Educators are needed on all levels and in all fields: the volunteers, the partly paid part-timers, the fully employed subject-matter-specialists, the organizers and administrators and teachers. But it also became clear that in addition for the multifold and complex challenges of a “society in change”, experts, professionals are needed to support change and learning successfully - andragogs.

Congratulations to the Department for Andragogy of Belgrade University and its 30 years of respected work in research, teaching, and development! The future will

confirm how important this work was and will be to make “Adult learning: a joy, a tool, a right and a shared responsibility” (UNESCO 1997).

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